

people actually believe, then they will decline to ratify a balanced budget amendment. So why not give it a chance?

Perhaps some of my colleagues believe that the Congressional Budget Office is wrong in its disturbing projections and dire warnings or that the Government Accountability Office is mistaken and the fiscal path we are on is sustainable after all or that the Concord Coalition and the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget are wrong about how national debt interest payments will continue to grow and add to the debt or that economists are wrong to warn about the impact of a sustained national debt of this magnitude. If my colleagues are convinced that everyone else is wrong and that our fiscal future is just fine and hunky-dory after all, then I still urge them to let the American decide. The Constitution belongs to the American people—not to the people here, although we are part of the American people.

President Obama once said that a \$4 trillion increase in the national debt is irresponsible and unpatriotic. This week he submitted a budget for fiscal year 2017 that reflects the same recycled misguided policies that have both added to the debt and have failed in Congress. On all of the budgets he submitted, there was only one vote for his budget. There was a bipartisan rejection in each case.

President Obama wants to expand a broken Medicaid system rather than reform it. He wants to impose higher taxes to prop up more government spending. He continues to turn a blind eye to the Nation's unsustainable entitlement programs that are propelling the national debt to unprecedented levels.

We all know the facts and the dangers about the national debt crisis. We all know that the American people are, if anything, more alarmed about this crisis than we are—certainly with the exception of myself. The only reason that Members of Congress have refused to give our fellow citizens a choice about adding a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution is that they know what that choice will be. I say with respect, but as strongly as I can, that this is not a legitimate basis for refusing to propose a balanced budget amendment. In our system of government, as Founder James Wilson once put it, the people are the masters of government. Only they have authority to set the rules for government. This choice must be theirs, not ours.

Here is the heart of the matter. First, the national debt crisis poses a significant and growing threat to the economic and national security of this country. In fact, we have never been in such an extended, perilous period than we are right now. Second, Congress has tried and failed to address this crisis by either willpower or legislation and will do so only if the Constitution requires it. Third, the decision of whether to use the Constitution to require fiscal

responsibility belongs to the American people, not to Congress. A balanced budget amendment would allow the American people to make that choice.

What are we afraid of? Are we afraid that we can't keep going on spending like this or that the American people might pass a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution? Yes, I think we are afraid of that, but we shouldn't be. We should be glad to have it in the Constitution itself. We could either take the responsibility we were elected for and propose a balanced budget amendment or the American people may do it for us.

The key to me is to pass a balanced budget constitutional amendment. I filed it, and it has a great number. It was filed right after we got into the Congress. It is an amendment that literally every one of us should support.

Let's get real about this national debt. Let's get real about helping our American people survive. Let's get real about having the greatest Nation on Earth continue to fight for liberty and freedom and independence and religious rights all over the world and all over this country. Let's get real about the future of our young people. Let's get real about being in the U.S. Senate and having an opportunity to form a real, solid approach to this, which would make all the difference in the world.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMBASSADOR NOMINATIONS

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I am here today to speak about U.S. policy toward Iran.

I wish to mention first that we are continuing to work on the issue of State Department nominees. Of course, my focus has been on the Swedish and Norwegian Ambassadors from our country to those two countries. We have now gone for 867 days without a confirmed ambassador to Norway and 476 days since the President nominated an ambassador for Sweden.

I think we have made it very clear that nearly every Member in this Chamber does not have an issue with having a vote or even an issue with the qualifications of these nominees who went through the Foreign Relations Committee without objection. Senator COTTON himself said: I believe both nominees are qualified. We have significant interest in Scandinavia. My hope is that both nominees receive a vote in the Senate sooner rather than later.

As we know, Senator CRUZ has had various issues not related to the nomi-

nees or our two strong allies, Norway and Sweden. We are hoping we can find a way forward so that he lifts his hold and we can continue to move forward with the 11th and 12th biggest investors in the United States of America, those countries, Norway and Sweden, being able to have Ambassadors like the rest of Europe. Every other major Nation has an ambassador.

I wish to thank Senator MCCONNELL and Senator REID and Senator CORKER and Senator CARDIN for their work on this issue. I am hoping to get this done as soon as possible.

U.S. POLICY TOWARD IRAN

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, as I mentioned, I rise today to discuss U.S. policy toward Iran—an issue that is critical to our national security and the security of our allies. When we talk about our policy toward Iran, we must do so with our eyes wide open. The Iranian regime is one of the world's leading State sponsors of terrorism. It threatens Israel, it destabilizes the region, and it abuses human rights. That is why I have cosponsored the Iran Policy Oversight Act, a bill that allows Congress to move quickly to impose economic sanctions against Iran's terrorist activity. It expands military aid to Israel, and it ensures that agencies charged with monitoring Iran have the resources they need.

Preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon is one of the most important objectives of our national security policy. I have strongly advocated for and supported the economic sanctions that have brought Iran to the negotiating table over the last few years. Those sanctions resulted in a nuclear nonproliferation agreement between Iran and the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, and China.

The Iran nuclear agreement, as we have talked about many times on this floor—including my own words—is an imperfect but necessary tool to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. In order for the agreement to work, of course, we must remember that simply trusting Iran to do the right thing is not an option. We must be vigilant in our monitoring and in our verification.

In my view, our national security strategy must focus on three things. This is overall: Protecting our citizens, eliminating threats to our national security, and never losing sight of our core American values. It is through this lens that we must approach Iran.

First of all, we must do all we can to keep our own citizens safe. We can't be naive. We cannot trust in the Iranian regime—and the Iranian regime continues to prove that is the case. Iran repeatedly violated the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1929 by testing ballistic missiles, most recently on October 10 and November 21 of 2015. The very next month, in December of 2015, Iran conducted a live fire exercise using unguided rockets